

# A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine



## Rand & Taylor

During the 1880s, the Boston architectural firm of Rand & Taylor is known to have designed two houses in Maine. These houses were consistent with the comfortable new homes which the firm was designing for Boston's growing suburban population in Brookline, Cambridge, Newton, and Winchester.

The Samuel S. Sewall House was built in 1883 and is located at 1111 Washington Street in Bath (Figures 1, 2). The William S. Perks House was built in 1888 and is located at 110 Main Street in Houlton (Figure 3). Also in 1888 Rand & Taylor designed the new banking rooms of the Georges National Bank and the Thomaston Savings Bank, both located in the Delano Building at 117 Main Street in Thomaston. In 1891 the firm prepared plans for a hotel in Ellsworth, which apparently was never built.

George D. Rand (1833-1910) came to Boston in 1869 after practicing architecture through the 1860s in Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> Rand first established a partnership with Frank W. Weston and then formed one with J. Foster Ober.<sup>2</sup> In 1881 Bertrand E. Taylor (1856-1909) joined Ober & Rand. Two years later Rand and Taylor established a new partnership with an office at 28 School Street in Boston.<sup>3</sup> By 1885 the firm was described as one of the most successful in the city.<sup>4</sup> Their work included a range of projects, including commercial buildings, hotels, campus buildings, and hospitals. Though less publicized, residential design for a growing class of businessmen and professionals was an important part of their practice as well.<sup>5</sup>

Both the Sewall and Perks houses are excellent examples of the Queen Anne aesthetic. While each was under construction, the local press commented on the work. When finished, the houses were judged to be among the finest residences in their respective communities.

The Samuel S. Sewall House is still one of the more opulent homes in Bath. Its highly decorative exterior complements a rich interior embellished with stained-glass windows and elaborate fireplaces. The architects' specifications survive, aiding study of the

house.<sup>6</sup> When Sewall hired Rand & Taylor in 1882, he was twenty-four years old and would be married that fall. A graduate of Yale, he would spend his career in the family shipbuilding firm, E. & A. Sewall.<sup>7</sup>

The exterior of the house is marked by the breadth and complex massing which are typical of Queen Anne design. The variety of shingle patterns and the carved floral motifs under the porch gable and on the front bay are also consistent with this style.

In other ways, the house reflects Rand's particular approach. Because the surviving specifications include pages in his handwriting, the design of the house may be seen as his work rather than Taylor's.<sup>8</sup> The paired columns on both the front and side porches of the Sewall House were an element commonly used by Rand, as may be noted in an old photograph of Rand's own house in Winchester.<sup>9</sup> The small second floor balcony of the Sewall House was also a favorite feature which Rand incorporated into several of his Winchester houses.<sup>10</sup> The oriel window in the third floor of the Sewall House is similar to those found in other houses designed by Rand, such as the one at 37 Rangeley Road in Winchester.<sup>11</sup> Towers were used by Rand through the 1870s, an example being the tower of the house for J. D. Runkle in Brookline.<sup>12</sup> The towers of the 1870s, however, were narrower and more vertical. By 1880 Rand adopted a more heavily proportioned tower in the design of his own home. A similarly weighty tower balances the front gable of the Sewall House.

The rear elevation of the Sewall House overlooks the Kennebec River, where a shipyard once stood. This side of the house is marked by a roof which slopes steeply from the third to second story. From the second story, a second roof emerges and slopes steeply down. This roof treatment may be found in many of Rand's designs.<sup>13</sup> Because the Sewall House is sited on land which drops sharply toward the river, the house has a high foundation at its back. The two sloping roofs counter the house's high rear elevation.

Colors for the Sewall House were specified by Rand. In his handwriting, the documents note that the first story was to be "dark olive relieved by red,"

Figure 1. Samuel S. Sewall House, Bath, circa 1890  
view (Private Collection).

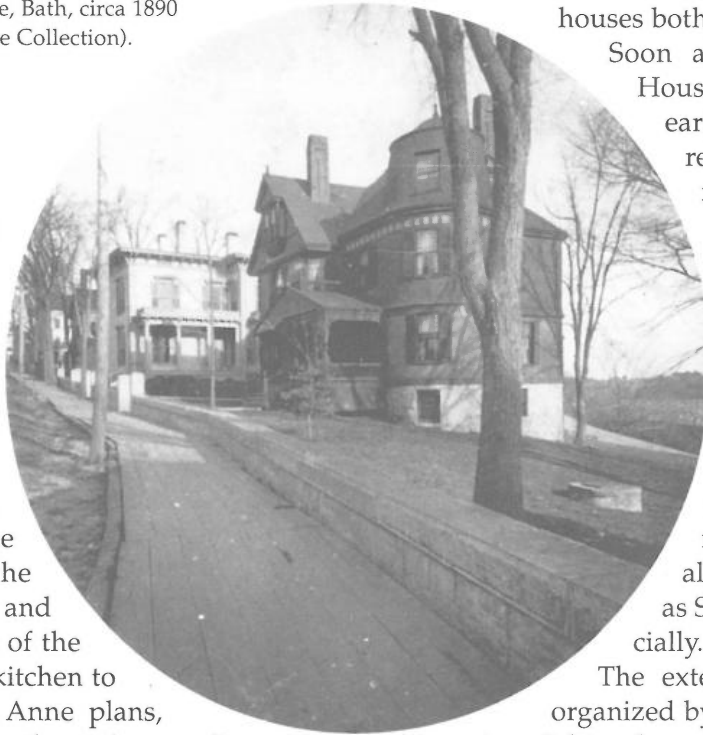
the second story was to be "brownish yellow" with "dark olive" trim, and other portions were to be "old gold" and "old red."

Inside, the house follows a layout of rooms which is conservative and consistent with plans from the 1870s. A center hallway leads from the entrance to the rear of the house, with a front parlor and adjoining library to the right of the hall and a dining room and kitchen to the left. Typical of Queen Anne plans, however, is the emphasis on the staircase. It wraps down and turns sideways, so that it presents a profile view when seen from the front door.

The second floor plan is more unusual. Its front bedroom, complete with fireplace, connects through a door with a large rear dressing room, which contains closet space. This master suite also connects directly with the bathroom. The bathroom has a second door opening onto the hall. The bathroom is unusually large for the period, with a wall and door dividing the bath area from the toilet area, allowing two people to use the facilities at one time. This arrangement must have been a deliberate choice made by the client, for it sacrificed bedroom space. The Sewall House has only three family bedrooms, when a total of four was the norm for a house of this scale. Other second floor space was dedicated to a servant's room, probably for a nurse who would be employed when the new couple had children. The third floor has two more rooms for servants.

In several respects, the Sewall House was more elegant than other homes of its size. The house has a number of stained-glass windows, located in the dining room, library, staircase landing, and doors between the entry vestibule and front hall. A single stained-glass window in the front hall or on the staircase landing would have been more typical. Elaborate fireplace mantels embellish the interior, as do encaustic tiles and Low art tiles from Chelsea, Massachusetts. The library has built-in bookcases, not a standard feature in the firm's houses of this size.

The *Bath Daily Times* reported on the progress of Sewall's house. "When it is completed," noted the newspaper, "Mr. Sewall will have one of the finest



houses both inside and out in the city."<sup>14</sup>

Soon after the Williams S. Perks House in Houlton was finished in early 1889, the *Aroostook Times* reported, "It is one of the finest residences in town."<sup>15</sup> Like the Sewall House, the Perks House has stained-glass windows and art tiles on the fireplace surrounds. The house was notable for Houlton, although less extravagant than the Sewall House. Perks was a pharmacist and ran his own business.<sup>16</sup> He was successful, although not in the same league as Sewall, either socially or financially.

The exterior of the Perks House is organized by complex Queen Anne massing. It has a large two-story bay projecting from a side elevation and another bay on the rear elevation. The house was sheathed in a variety of shingles as well as clapboards. In the early twentieth century, the main elevation was altered. A glassed-in porch was built across the front, a rectangular stained-glass window was replaced by an arched window, and another window was replaced by a door, leading to the porch roof.

The plan of the interior is inventive. A large rectangular hall extends to the right across the front of the house. The staircase is not positioned in front of the main entrance, but rather descends to the right of the visitor. Straight ahead, as one proceeds through the hall, doors open to the dining room and a sitting room. To the left of the hall is a parlor, and to the right is a corridor leading to the back stairs and kitchen.

As the Perks House was designed in the late 1880s, it was probably the effort of Taylor or a younger architect working under him. By this time Rand was spending much of the year in Florida, although he did maintain a Boston address and continued to be involved in some of the firm's important projects. In general, Taylor's work reflects his training under Rand. The Perks House has the tight massing and large volumes which were typical of Rand.

When the Georges National Bank and the Thomaston Savings Bank moved into their new quarters in the Delano Building, the *Rockland Opinion* and the *Rockland Courier-Gazette* expressed admiration for these modern offices.<sup>17</sup> The *Courier-Gazette* noted that the bank building was the only business in Thomaston having plate glass windows. The paneled oak interiors and decorative painting also were commended. Rand &



Figure 2. Samuel S. Sewall House, Bath, 1990 view (MHPC).

Taylor received many commissions for large commercial buildings in Boston, so the Maine banking rooms would have been consistent with these projects. Many of the firm's commercial projects in Boston are gone, but buildings on South Street in that city survive as a testimony to their work of this period.<sup>18</sup>

In 1891 the firm planned a \$20,000 hotel for Ellsworth.<sup>19</sup> No record of its construction has been found, however, so the project appears to have been dropped. In the early 1880s, when a partner of Ober, Rand oversaw the reconstruction and enlargement of the Hotel Vendome in Boston. Taylor also worked on this hotel, and later Rand & Taylor would claim it as their work.<sup>20</sup> Located on Commonwealth Avenue, it was one of the most luxurious hotels in the city. Rand later would plan a major hotel in Winter Park, Florida,<sup>21</sup> and Rand & Taylor would design the Algonquin Hotel in St. Andrews, New Brunswick.<sup>22</sup>

In 1893 Rand sold his share of the partnership to Taylor. Taylor established a new partnership, Kendall, Taylor & Stevens. Samuel S. Sewall employed this firm to design a cottage, built at Small Point in 1899. Kendall, Taylor & Stevens also were hired for three projects in Houlton, perhaps relating to the Perks commission.

The two known houses by Rand & Taylor in Maine were built for educated, affluent clients. In this re-

spect, they were similar to the firm's many patrons in the growing suburban towns around Boston. Like their counterparts in the Boston suburbs, these Maine clients sought status by building "artistic" homes designed by a noted architectural firm.

The specifications for the Sewall House are valuable in that they prove that a busy principal architect such as Rand was directly involved in residential projects. Even as he was working on larger projects, he did not delegate responsibility to a junior architect for a relatively small-scale residential job. He personally wrote the specification document, which indicates that he visited the site.

Even as Rand and Taylor pursued large commissions, they continued to take an interest in designing comfortable homes for the region's growing upper-middle class. Although these houses are considered large today, they were not so grand that they would be subdivided or torn down. Like the Rand & Taylor houses of suburban Boston, the Maine houses are delightful, commodious, yet not palatial. Designed for a segment of the American population which emerged in the years after the Civil War, these houses -like that population - endure.



Figure 3. William S. Perks House, Houlton, circa 1890 view (MHPC).

## NOTES

1. Richard Herndon, *Boston of Today*, Boston, 1892, p. 364. Rand's career has been outlined in a series of articles, "George Rand's Winchester," by Maureen Meister, the *Winchester (Mass.) Star*, May 23-October 10, 1991. Copies of the articles are at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston, and the Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library.
2. The firm of Weston & Rand appears in the Boston directories from 1870 through 1875. The firm of Ober & Rand appears in the directories from 1877 through 1880.
3. The firm of Rand & Taylor appears in the directories from 1883 through 1893.
4. *Leading Manufacturers and Merchants of the City of Boston*, Boston, 1885, p. 126.
5. The firm's records have not survived. A partial record of their work may be found in reports in the "Building Intelligence" column of the *American Architect and Building News*.
6. The specifications are with the current owners. Photocopies are available through the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.
7. Reports on construction of the house appear in the *Bath Daily Times*, November 23, 1882 and April 27, 1883. Information on Sewall comes from an obituary in the *Bath Daily Times*, February 11, 1935, and a file on the Sewall family at the Bath Historical Society.
8. Rand's handwriting may be identified, as it appears in a signed manuscript, "Winchester Houses and Other Buildings," in the archives of Rollins College.
9. *Winchester Star*, August 8, 1991. Although altered, the house survives at 1 Wildwood Street.
10. *American Architect and Building News*, December 28, 1878 and July 3, 1880.
11. *American Architect and Building News*, April 30, 1887.

12. Located at 84 High Street, this house was illustrated in the *American Architect and Building News*, May 5, 1877.
13. *American Architect and Building News*, December 28, 1878.
14. April 27, 1883.
15. March 14, 1889. Reports on the house appeared in the same newspaper on April 19, 1888; June 28, 1888. The project also is listed in the *American Architect and Building News*, April 21, 1888, p. xvi. It was to cost \$6,000. Perks also considered a design for a gambrel roofed Shingle Style house by the noted Portland architect John Calvin Stevens. A sketch for this house appears in Plate XLIII of *Examples of American Domestic Architecture* by John Calvin Stevens and Albert Winslow Cobb, New York, 1889. A sheet of first and second floor plans is in the Stevens Collection, Maine Historical Society, Portland.

16. Cora M. Putnam, *The Story of Houlton*, Portland, 1958, pp. 218-19.
17. *Rockland Opinion*, November 16, 1888; *Rockland Courier-Gazette*, November 18, 1888. The project also is listed in the *American Architect and Building News*, October 20, 1888, p. xix.
18. See 102-4, 112, 121-23, and 129-31 South Street, all from 1888.
19. *American Architect and Building News*, June 27, 1891, p. xvi.
20. *Leading Manufacturers*. The same publication includes an entry on "The Hotel Vendome," p. 225, in which Ober and Rand receive the credit. Other records indicate that Ober, Rand, and Taylor all were involved.
21. The Seminole, alluded to in *Leading Manufacturers*.
22. Now gone, it was illustrated in the *American Architect and Building News*, December 14, 1889.

## LIST OF KNOWN COMMISSIONS IN MAINE BY RAND AND TAYLOR

Samuel S. Sewall House, 1111 Washington Street, Bath, 1883, Extant  
 William S. Perks House, 110 Main Street, Houlton, 1888, Extant  
 Georges National Bank, 117 Main Street, Thomaston, 1888, Altered  
 Thomaston Savings Bank, 117 Main Street, Thomaston, 1888, Altered  
 Hotel Project, Ellsworth, 1891, Not Built

Volume 7, 1995

Published by Maine Citizens for Historic Preservation  
 Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Editor  
 Roger G. Reed, Associate Editor